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Versatile Attorney Jim Donovan Looks For New Fields To Conquer

By FREDERICK H. TREESH

NEW YORK (UPI)—On an August day in 1957, lawyer James B. Donovan arrived at his Lake Placid, N.Y., summer home to begin a vacation. His wife began unpacking while he prepared for a round of golf.

The telephone rang. It was a member of the Brooklyn Bar Association who had been delegated to find a defense attorney for Col. Rudolph Ivanovich Abel, the Russian master spy who for nine years had plied his cloak and dagger trade here.

Donovan took the case. He conducted the defense with vigor, although Abel was convicted. The government asked for the electric chair as his punishment but Donovan appealed for a prison sentence instead. Abel got 30 years.

Part of Donovan's plea for prison instead of death for Abel proved incredibly foresighted in the light of events to come:

"It is possible," he told the court, "that in the foreseeable future an American of equal rank will be captured by the Soviet Union or an ally. At such time, an exchange of prisoners through diplomatic channels could be in the best interest of the United States."

On May 1, 1960, Francis Gary Powers' U2 reconnaissance plane was shot down on a spy mission 200 miles inside Russia. Powers was sentenced to 10 years in a Soviet prison.

Early in 1962, Donovan secretly negotiated the type of prisoner exchange he envisioned three years earlier. The United States gave up Abel; Russia returned Powers and another American.

Right now, the amazingly versatile Jim Donovan is carrying on another round of tedious international negotiations — with Cuba's Fidel Castro for the release of 1,113 anti-Castro Cubans rounded up in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion. At the same time, the silver-haired, 46-year-old corporate lawyer is campaigning as a Democrat for the U.S. Senate.

Donovan The Candidate:

In his first quest for elective office, Donovan is running for Congress against Republican Sen. Jacob Javits, a popular, liberal-minded lawmaker who served four terms



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Donovan is primarily a corporate attorney — his practice includes big companies and insurance industry groups—but his defense of Soviet spy Abel enhanced his reputation as a trial lawyer.

Donovan regarded the Abel case as a public duty for himself and as a test of the maturity of the American legal system (did, in fact, the constitutional guarantees of due process of law apply to a Soviet agent in the tense cold war climate of the time?)

Col. Abel was, in Donovan's opinion, "a damn good spy" — a dedicated man doing a dangerous and important job for his country.

Donovan appealed Abel's case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where the conviction was upheld by a 5-4 vote. Chief Justice Earl Warren said of Donovan: "In my time on this court no man has undertaken a more arduous, more self-sacrificing task."

Donovan The Negotiator:

For eight days in early February, 1962, Donovan negotiated in East Berlin with a burly Russian named Ivan Shiskin, ostensibly a second secretary of the Soviet Embassy there but actually the head of Soviet intelligence in Europe.

His dealing reached a conclusion at 3 a.m. Feb. 10 in the mid-

on vacation — Donovan was praised by President Kennedy for a "unique" performance conducted "with greatest skill and courage." The Central Intelligence Agency awarded him the Distinguished Intelligence Medal.

The Cuban Family Committee representative who met with Donovan in the recent pre-campaigning breakfast said he thought the deal with Castro was in its last stages. Donovan, tight-lipped on such matters, said only: "I hope so."

Donovan The Man:

Donovan's first introduction to top secrets and the conduct of espionage was during World War II after a stint as a Navy underwater demolition man. He was named general counsel of the Office of Defense Research, which dealt with the Manhattan Project (the A-bomb) and biological warfare. Then he moved to chief counsel for the Office of Strategic Service (OSS), America's super-secret spy agency.